MOLECULAR CLONING AND EXPRESSION OF A cDNA ENCODING A PUTATIVE PEPTIDE RECEPTOR FROM THE RAT HYPOTHALAMUS. M.S. Statnick, N.G. Mayne, D.R. Gehlert, J.P. Burnett. Lilly Research Laboratories, Eli Lilly and Company, Indianapolis, IN 46285-0424.

Neuropeptide Y (NPY) receptors represent a family of G-protein coupled receptors that have great molecular diversity. To gain further insight into the molecular structure of NPY receptors, we have attempted to clone new members of this receptor family. Using degenerate primers to conserved sequences of the neuropeptide Y1 receptor and the polymerase chain reaction (PCR), we amplified and cloned a cDNA fragment from rat genomic DNA. A PCR generated single-stranded ³²P-labeled probe of this cDNA was used to screen a rat hypothalamus cDNA library. Three clones were isolated and sequenced. Analysis of these sequences indicated an incomplete 5' coding sequence. Using asymmetric PCR in the rat hypothalamus cDNA library, we cloned the remaining 5' sequence and reconstructed the full coding sequence of the cDNA. The ~2.5 kb "composite" clone encodes a 306 amino acid protein that has seven hydrophobic domains. The cloned cDNA has highest homology to NPY, somatostatin and opioid receptors. Southern blot analysis of rat genomic DNA suggests that this receptor is encoded by a single gene. By Northern blot analysis a single ~6-kb transcript was identified in the rat brain. No mRNA was detected in any of the peripheral tissues examined. Analysis by RT-PCR showed that the receptor is expressed in many areas of the brain and pituitary. Using in situ hybridization, the highest levels of expression were localized to the anterior and intermediate lobes of the pituitary, reticular thalamic nucleus, paraventricular nucleus of the hypothalamus and granule cell layer of the cerebellum. Lower amounts of transcript were found in other brain areas. Following transient expression in AV12 cells, the receptor failed to bind NPY, somatostatin or opioid receptor ligands. Expression of an HSV-tagged version of the receptor in AV12 cells was detected in large amounts using fluorescence microscopy following transfection. Thus, it appears that cells transfected with this cDNA are capable of expressing the recombinant protein. We suggest that this cDNA encodes an orphan peptide receptor that may be involved in neuroendocrine regulation. The recent identification of an endogenous ligand that binds to an orphan opioid receptor offer approaches that may be taken to isolate the ligand for this receptor.

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